

REMARKS

This amendment and request for reconsideration is intended to be fully responsive to the Final Action mailed October 24, 2003.

At the outset it is noted that minor typographical errors has been corrected in Independent Claim 22, which recites the slidable ring 52 disposed on the holding strap 40 as shown in Figure 1 of this invention. No new matter or new issues are raised by this amendment because the Examiner treated claim 22 as if this amendment to claim 22 were previously presented.

Claims 1-6, 8-10 and 12-26 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over Frietze (USP 5,695,101) in view of Newman (USP 5,370,286). This rejection is respectfully traversed in view of the above amendment and the following remarks.

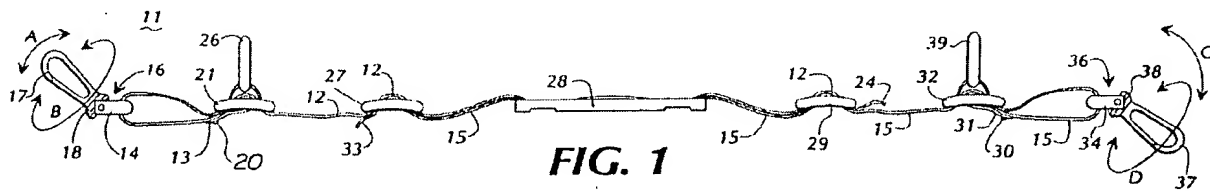
According to this invention, the article-holding strap has two length adjustment devices and a slidable ring 52 disposed between the two adjustment devices. In addition, a slidable ring 28 is disposed on the engaging strap 12. The prior art fails to teach or render obvious these slidable rings 28, 52.

Independent claim 1 recites length adjustment devices for the article-engaging strap 12 and the article-holding strap 40 whereby the slidable ring 52 is disposed on the article-holding strap upstream of the length adjustment device (i.e., "a slidable ring slidably disposed on said article-holding strap between said first article-holding strap length adjustment device and said

first releasable fastener”). Independent claim 22 recites an arrangement wherein the first releasable fastener 48 is releasably attached to the article-holding strap 40 through a slidable ring 52 disposed on the holding strap 40 between the first article-holding strap length adjustment device 50 and the first releasable fastener 48.

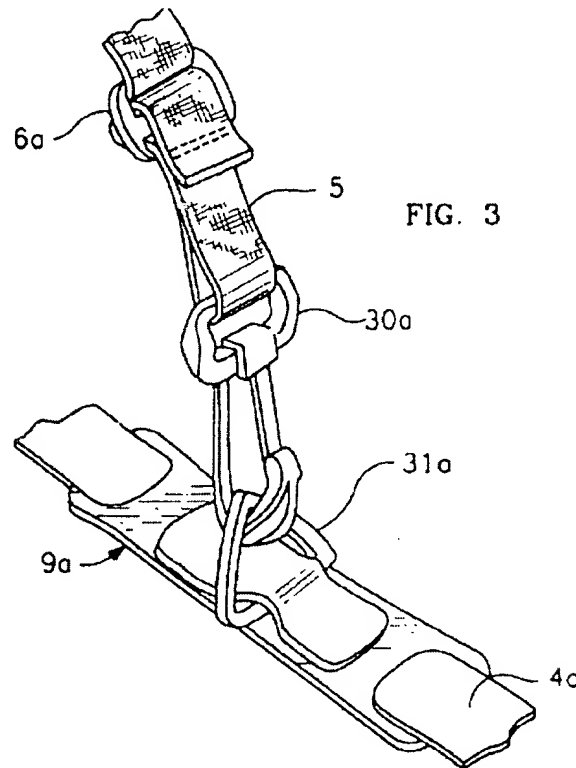
Notably claims 5, 9 and 19 recite slidable rings on both the strap 40 and the strap 12. Claims 23-26 recite the arrangement where there are two length adjustment devices 50 for the article-holding strap 40 and the slidable ring 52 is disposed between the two (2) length adjustment devices 50.

Frietze ‘101 and Newman ‘286 fail to teach slidable rings; instead, these documents disclose rings that are fixed. At page 3 of the Official Action, the Examiner acknowledges that Frietze ‘101 “fails to disclose or suggest a slidable ring disposed on the equipment-holding strap ...”. The Examiner relies on Newman ‘286 for a teaching of a slidable ring 26, 39 which are shown below.



Clearly, the rings 26, 39 of Newman ‘286 are not slidable. Their movement is restricted by the clips 21, 32. Additionally, the rings 26, 39 of Newman ‘286 are not disposed between two length adjustment devices 50 (see claims 23-26).

With respect to claims 5, 9 and 19, the Examiner asserts that Frietze '101 discloses slidable rings 31a, 31b but, as shown below, the ring 31a clearly cannot slide.




The Examiner incorrectly states that the rings 31a, 31b of Frietze '101 can “slide about or along the circumference of the equipment-engaging strap from one side of the coupling fasteners (10a, 10b) to the other.” See Office Action at page 4. The rings of Frietze '101 are the antithesis of a sliding arrangement, because the rings 31a, 31b are fixed in place. Frietze '1901 explicitly states that the user must adjust the encircling loop 4a to adjust the relative position of the rings 31a, 31b. See column 3, lines 53-67 of Frietze '101.

Lastly, one purpose of the slidable ring 52 of this invention is to permit the connection of the fastener 48 to the slidable ring 52 in the manner shown in Figure 4. It would not be proper to modify Fietze '101 to add a sliding ring to function like ring 52 of the present invention, because the strap 5 is a "shoulder harness" and the modification suggested by the Examiner would destroy the purpose and intended function of the device described in Fietze '101. It would not make sense to modify the shoulder harness 5 of Fietze '101 to include a slidable ring.

For the foregoing reasons, it is respectfully submitted that the current claims are allowable over the prior art. It is respectfully submitted that the above amendments and comments resolve all outstanding issues and place this application in condition for allowance. Should the Examiner believe additional discussion would advance the prosecution of the present application, they are invited to contact the undersigned at the local telephone number listed below.

Respectfully submitted,

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